

## *Special Message from Governor Neil Abercrombie* **Celebrating Quality & Access in Early Learning**

March 17, 2014

As we take stock in the midst of this fiscal turnaround, we have an opportunity to show where our values and priorities truly lie, and an obligation to make prudent investments.

Education is a lifelong marathon, but a strong start is crucial—it is simply not *pono* that so many students enter public education already at different levels on a podium. Our single most important investment is putting our *keiki* on equal footing through early childhood education and development. Bringing all children up to this level of readiness is no small task, which is why we must begin immediately, by using and expanding the educational system already existing in our state.

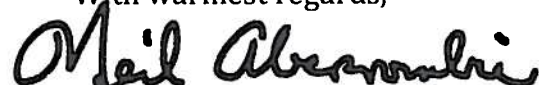
The Legislature has already shown its support for the private sector by funding the Preschool Open Doors program last year, helping families to send their children to the community-based programs that will prepare them for kindergarten. This November, voters will be asked whether the state constitution should be changed to allow public monies to fund private, community-based preschools.

Should the voters approve, the State would be able to partner with the private preschools that are the predominant providers, making additional funding available for you and marking an important step for you and the State in preparing more *keiki* for kindergarten.

Any vision for early learning for all four year olds in Hawai'i must include you, educators who are already here—who have long been working with children in the classroom to find what works best for the *keiki* in your community. Your teaching is not just daycare: you provide some of the first and most crucial skills and learning experiences that make these children ready to succeed. This foundation echoes throughout their careers as learners.

*Mahalo* for your dedication and commitment to our families and communities!

With warmest regards,

  
NEIL ABERCROMBIE  
Governor, State of Hawai'i